

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

Gunnison sage grouse reconsidered for listing

By JUDITH KOHLER Associated Press Writer

Posted: 08/19/2009 02:46:29 PM MDT

Updated: 08/19/2009 09:29:35 PM MDT

DENVER—The Gunnison sage grouse, found primarily in southwest Colorado, will get another chance at federal protection following the settlement of a lawsuit by environmental groups.

The settlement filed Tuesday gives the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service until June 30, 2010, to decide whether the chicken-like bird with spiky tail feathers should be added to the endangered species list.

The Gunnison sage grouse is among the species getting a second look in the wake of a federal report that found improper political meddling in endangered species rulings.

The report by the inspector general for the Interior Department found that Julie MacDonald, a former deputy assistant overseeing the Fish and Wildlife Service, and other Bush administration officials interfered with federal biologists' decision-making for multiple species.

"The only reason the Gunnison sage grouse isn't already listed is because of political interference," said Amy Atwood, senior attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity in Portland, Ore.

Atwood said the Gunnison sage grouse is among the most endangered birds in the U.S.

In 2006, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decided not to place the Gunnison sage grouse on the endangered species list, which would trigger protections and possible restrictions on activities in its habitat. Federal officials said then that the bird's numbers had stabilized or increased.

Environmental groups, however, contend the number of birds has dropped due to loss of habitat because of livestock grazing, oil and gas drilling, construction of houses and motorized recreation.

The Fish and Wildlife Service estimated in 2005 that about 5,000 of the birds lived in southwest Colorado and near the Colorado-Utah border. The biggest population, roughly 4,000, is in western Colorado's Gunnison Basin, said Bridget Fahey, endangered species chief for the regional Fish and Wildlife Service office in Denver.

The bird's range once extended to northwestern New Mexico, northeastern Arizona and southeastern Utah. The birds are about a third smaller than the greater sage grouse, which reaches 2 feet tall.

Advertisement

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™

B-015-001: Comment Noted (In Review)

Your email/letter/comment form has been received and your comment noted.

The Environmental Impact Statement is anticipated to be completed in late 2010 and will be available at

<http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/ea.htm>.

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

Fahey said federal officials will have three choices at the end of the new review of the Gunnison sage grouse: to give it federal protection; decide it doesn't warrant protection; or decide it warrants protection but is a lower priority than other species.

The state of Colorado has teamed up with the Fish and Wildlife Service in a program encouraging landowners to protect the birds and their habitat. The goal is to preserve the birds and avoid federal oversight.

Advertisement

Visit our 50,000 square foot showroom of New & Used Office Furniture

OFFICE LIQUIDATORS
Profit From Our Experience
11111 W 6th Ave
Between Kipling & Simms
303-759-3375

SHOWROOM COUPON
\$50 OFF
MARKED PRICE ON ITEMS TOTALING \$300 OR MORE

SHOP ONLINE
WITH FREE
SCHEDULED
DELIVERY

OfficeLiquidators.com
Save even more by entering promo code A1689
in our online shopping cart

You must present this while visiting our showroom at time of purchase.
One per customer. Cannot be combined with other offers. Expires 10-31-07

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™